**INTEGRATING A HEPATITIS C PEER SUPPORT WORKER IN A PUBLIC DRUG TREATMENT CLINIC**

N Shrestha1 F Tenison2 K Teevan2 J Pritchard Jones2 S Sheils2 E Doherty1 P Haber1

1 Drug Health Services, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney Local Health District

2 AW Morrow Gastro and Liver Services Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

**Background:** The ETHOS Project (Enhanced Treatment for Hepatitis C in Opioid Substitution Settings) and other similar projects have demonstrated the effectiveness of peer support in opiate substitution settings. In Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) the Drug Health Service (DHS), HARP service and the RPAH Liver Clinic have worked collaboratively to commence a HCV peer project. The position was funded by the SLHD. The main aim is to increase the number of DHS clients accessing the nurse-led liver clinic for liver assessment and consideration of anti-viral therapy, build stronger links between services, and increase understanding of the barriers to accessing HCV treatment and care.

**Method:** In early 2015 an experienced Peer Support Worker (PSW) was recruited for 1 day per week. Clinical support was provided by a hepatology CNC who did a fortnightly outreach clinic in DHS. The duties of the PSW were to educate the clients about HCV, its impact upon health, importance of liver assessment, benefits of treatment and support clients to attend the nurse-led clinic. A Hepatitis C dietician has now joined the service and attends monthly. A Fibroscan is available monthly. The PSW has collected data on activity and interaction with clients. Feedback from clients is currently being sought

**Results**: A total of 60 patients have engaged with PSW, 25 attended the Hepatology Nurse clinic and 7 have seen the dietician. 1 client has commenced treatment and 5 have commenced treatment workup. The Drug Health nursing staff have increased their engagement with hepatitis related activity and are keen to support HBV vaccination (2 are now doing the vaccination course). In- service education for DHS clinic staff has also been conducted.

**Conclusion:** PSW’s can play a vital role in engaging HCV patients with health services. Although this project is only in the initial stages we have already shown a positive impact. Collaboration between services is an important component of success. We plan to further expand the collaboration with partners such as NUAA and plan to further expand the service to other LHD DHS sites as well as private prescribers. Evaluation is planned.

**Disclosure of Interest:** PSW’s can play a vital role in engaging HCV patients with health services. Although this project is only in the initial stages we have already shown a positive impact. Collaboration between services is an important component of success. We plan to further expand the collaboration with partners such as NUAA and plan to further expand the service to other LHD DHS sites as well as private prescribers. Evaluation is planned.